

## **Abandoned Tree Removal**

### Definition/Purpose

Abandoned Christmas and/or Apple Tree Removal means removal of Christmas and/or Apple tree fields for integrated pest management and for reducing sedimentation. An abandoned tree field can be of any size or age trees where standard management practices (e.g., maintaining groundcover, insect and disease control, fertilizer applications and annual shearing practices) for the production of the trees are discontinued or abandoned. The field must have been abandoned for at least 5 years. Abandonment leads to adverse soil erosion formations such as gullies and to production of disease inoculums and increased pest population. Conversion to grass, hardwoods, or white pine on abandoned fields further protects soil loss by preventing runoff on steep slopes due to a better groundcover thereby providing additional water quality protection. Benefits include water quality protection, prevention of soil erosion, and wildlife habitat establishment.

### Policies

1. Trees are not to be completely removed but cut to an appropriate level, not to exceed 3 inches. All side branches are to be removed.
2. Debris is to be processed onsite by chipping, windrowing and/or burning as deemed legal by the Division of Air Quality. Windrowing is not allowed when applicable diseases would remain onsite. Onsite disposal is not allowed in drainage ways.
3. Offsite processing or disposal costs will not be covered under this BMP.
4. Re-vegetation with grasses, pines or hardwoods is required and needs to correspond to species specific planting date guides. Temporary seeding is allowed on an as needed basis. All NRCS Standards and ACSP policies relative to vegetation are to be followed. (See Section V for guidance).
5. Payments will be based on actual costs per acre for clearing, chipping/wind rowing), not to exceed the cap. Receipts are required. See conservation cover and cropland conversion for reseeding costs.
6. If a cooperator is going to graze livestock on cost shared fields, then he/she must provide at his or her own cost livestock exclusion, watering facilities, stream crossings, etc., to protect water quality. The cooperator must not allow cost shared fields to be overgrazed.
7. When determining acreage for which payment can be made, only the acreage actually planted shall be considered. The entire abandoned stand must be removed to be eligible for cost share assistance. The area occupied by farm roads, road ditches, etc. shall be included in the cropland conversion. This includes stabilizing existing ag roads.
8. An operator shall only receive cost share for this practice once on the same acreage. Minimum life of BMP is 10 years.

## Agriculture Cost Share Program

9. The abandoned tree fields cannot be replanted into Christmas and/or Apple Trees within the maintenance period. The BMP is considered out of compliance if the land-use changes out of the replanted trees or grasses to another use within the maintenance period.

### Standards

N. C. Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG), Section IV Conservation Cover #327, Pasture and Hay Planting #512, Critical Area Planting #342, Tree / Shrub Establishment #612 and Tree / Shrub Site Preparation #490, Brush Management #314.

The seeding rates and nutrient requirements as listed in the FOTG, Section 4 under Pasture and Hay Planting (Code 512) or as recommended by N.C. State University will be used.